

Testimony of: Debra Miller Sarazin
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Before Committee on Labor and Public Employees
SB 987 – An Act Requiring Community Workforce Agreements
for Construction Projects at the Connecticut State University
System

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My name is Debra Sarazin. I am president of Sarazin General Contractors, Inc, located in North Windham and a Member of Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut. We are an open shop contractor doing primarily state and federal work. We have completed numerous projects at the University of Connecticut, The University of Connecticut Health Center, Eastern Connecticut State University and Central Connecticut State University for the past twenty years representing millions of dollars in revenue. We have successfully worked with open shop and union subcontractors on many projects. SB 987 would prevent us from bidding these Connecticut State University System projects. Therefore, I cannot support SB987.

Currently, the state of Connecticut along with almost every other state in our nation is facing budget deficits and high unemployment rates. It is unconscionable to consider a bill that would discriminate against 80% of the taxpaying construction workers in Connecticut. The state of Connecticut and the Connecticut University System by statute are committed to providing "Equal Employment Opportunities." This bill defies the most basic premise of this commitment. On January 27, Governor Malloy addressed approximately 600 members of the Connecticut Associated Builders and Contractors. His message was clear: "Connecticut is open for business." This bill would eliminate the possibility of work for the majority of Connecticut construction workers on thousands of state projects. SB 987 mandates a community workforce agreement be required for any construction contract with the Connecticut State University System. If we were to bid, we might be able to use a very small percentage of our own workers, however they would need to join a union as non union workers would not be allowed on site... This would result in forced compliance with union jurisdiction rules. There are many reasons that this would be problematic. An agreement with a labor organization is not the answer for all Connecticut contractors. "Open for business," should encourage all responsible CT contractors to bid, not eliminate 80% of the industry. These publicly funded projects are paid for by the same CT taxpayers that are being excluded from work.

Currently, these projects contain provisions requiring payment of prevailing wages. Prevailing wage requires that all workers on the jobs receive equal pay and benefits for their category of work. Contractors are put through rigorous prequalification requirements to ensure quality and the best value for the project owner. This process is rendered ineffective if a project is not competitively bid. The State of Connecticut and the University System have put in place these prequalification processes in order to insure the integrity and qualifications of all bidders. This process involves: confirming the status of a company's bonding capacity, financial capacity, compliance with ethics, employment, tax and other laws, OSHA compliance and safety records, quality control practices, staff resumes and previous work experience. The result of this should

provide the owner agency with a fully screened panel of local contractors that are preapproved to do the work-regardless of union affiliation. In other words, the best the state has to offer.

It has been documented that union only community workforce agreements and project labor agreements cost 15 to 20% more than the same project bid without the union only mandates. These agreements limit the number of contractors bidding and decrease the value that could be achieved on these publicly-funded projects. A job without these requirements is nondiscriminatory and meets the State's "Equal Employment Opportunity" commitment. As proposed, SB 987 would prevent us from competing for these Connecticut State University System projects.

I believe that any community workforce agreement would be detrimental to Connecticut by decreasing competition, increasing the costs, and discriminating against local contractors. On behalf of the industry, I urge you to oppose SB 987.